1:Radin E-5 (1908-1913) 1923
NP12 Winnebago NP12

776 is but a faint survival of former times. The older myths are full of references to the evil spirits, and the cosmological myths represent
[773] the world as infested with evil spirits who are on the point of exterminating the human race until the culture heroes come to the rescue. It would almost seem as if, from a purely matter-of-fact point of view, these early culture heroes had destroyed all the evil spirits. Certainly they are not regarded as of great consequence, for if they were we ought to find a certain number of prayers addressed to them asking them not to harm anyone. They seem to be mere logics, personifications of fear, and that is perhaps why they are so intimately connected with darkness.

812 At the present time the vast majority of Winnebago ascribe evil, in so far as they explain it at all, to three causes—either to some
[688 failure on their part to perform a rite in the prescribed way, to
782] the fact that they have not invoked the spirits for protection (i. e., attempted to pass through life without the aid of the spirits), or to the evil machinations of other men. Often one derives the impression that they accept evil and do not try to explain it. It seems to be a trait characteristic of the Winnebago, and perhaps characteristic of other North American tribes, that explanations are developed for the positive aspects of things. Certainly it would require some thought on the part of a Winnebago to explain why a war party that had, in the opinion of the chief, all the necessary requirements for victory, should nevertheless be defeated. He would doubtless find some reason, after a while, but it would be an afterthought and would probably vary from individual to individual. In some cases lack of success would be ascribed to the fact that an individual had been misled by an evil spirit, but this is clearly a secondary explanation because the individual, when questioned, would admit that he had no way of telling whether this was so until he had failed in something. We base this statement on an actual instance.

776 There is some evidence to show that there may have originally existed among the Winnebago a belief that the spirits were neither good nor bad; that they could be either at different times. In two notable instances, that of Disease-giver and Water-spirit, this is true at the present time. The former deity is the only one to whom prayers are addressed beseeching him not to present to man his death-dealing side.

In the myths we find a definite incarnation of evil in the case of
[192] a spirit called *Hereegu'nina*. The meaning of this word as given by a Winnebago, and which seems to be justified, is "he whose existence is doubtful." If this is an old Winnebago word it would confirm the view advanced above, that the Winnebago were not very much concerned about the evil spirits. There is, however, a possibility
[177] that *Hereegu'nina* is, in part, a post-Columbian development due

1:Radin E-5 (1908-1913) 1923
NP12 Winnebago NP12

to give it had their menses and were fasting. When the feast was about to be held there was no food and their mother gave the girls some of the sacred food and the unclean girls boiled it and ate it. 614 796 841

The following spring when the girls were out helping their mother tan some hide a bear approached them and tried to kill the girls. The old woman fought the bear off as best she could, but he paid no attention to her and tried to get at the girls. Finally he killed the girls. Then the old woman attacked the bear and finally threw him down and killed him, using her tanning stick as a weapon.

Now this bear was not an ordinary bear such as live on this earth, but his body was covered with blue clay. He had come out of a spring of water shortly before he came to this place. The girls had eaten sacred food when they were unclean, and that is why this bear came and killed them. [776 688]

Since then that particular band has stopped giving this bear feast.

THE SNAKE CLAN FEAST

When a person wishes to give a snake feast, four chickens must be obtained. The nephew of the feast giver is then told to prepare these chickens and make the general preparations. 796 614

The feast is given in the fall, just as the snakes are supposed to go into their winter quarters and close their doors. The winter is their night, and then they go to sleep. [825]

Shortly before the feast begins the host takes out a bundle containing four snake skins—a yellow-snake skin, a rattlesnake skin, a blow-snake skin, and a bull-snake skin. In honor of these he gives his feast and makes his offerings.

As the fall of the year is to the snakes the same as our evening, the Winnebago give this feast in their honor then, in much the same way as we have our supper before retiring for the night. The snake skins are representatives of the first four snakes Earthmaker made and which he pierced through the earth in the direction of the east. The snake skins are kept to represent the four original snake-beings and to keep evil away from homes. That is why offerings are made to them. Four men only are invited to this feast (as main participants), and they must each eat a chicken. [773]

The host himself opens the door for the snakes. In front of him, next to the fireplace, he makes four holes in the ground, thus opening the door for them. There he likewise places tobacco for them. First he pours tobacco in the fire, for the fire is the mediator between the people and the spirit. The fire tells the spirit the wishes of the people and is, in general, in charge of the members of the tribe. For that reason they always pour tobacco upon it. [782]

Now the host rises and speaks. "Grandfather (fire), you who stand in the center of the lodge, I offer you tobacco, for you are the interpreter (between the spirits and human beings), and I know that 796 614 537 372

1:Radin E-5 (1908-1913) 1923
NP12 Winnebago NP12

me, 'Some day when there is a dearth of people, some night-blest one will take pity on you. Submit to it.' Thus he spoke to me and what he referred to was this feast. These feasts are all sacred, but this is the most sacred one. That is what he used to tell me. It is not to be trifled with, even in respect to the rituals within the lodge. Never should one cross the lodge directly. If you trifle with this rule you will bring sorrow upon yourselves. The so-called night-soldiers are not to be trifled with. So he told me. The so-called night-soldiers, like soldiers on this earth, are stern. Truly they are stern, said my father. If we were to slight one of them we would most assuredly be punished for it, and punishment by them means death. So he spoke to me. But, said he, 'if, on the other hand, any one attends to all that pertains to this ceremony it will be a means of obtaining life. It will be a good thing to do, and one would thereby obtain a good life. Therefore, I have always looked upon the Night dance with awe, for it is a very holy thing.' So spoke my father. For that reason, consequently, whenever my father gave a Night feast he would encourage us to pay careful attention to it, and that is why I have always tried to do so. Remember, however, that I am not a child of the night-blest ones, and that, therefore, I have very little to say. However, I will start a song, which will be a greeting to this lodge, and I will sing it as I am passing around the lodge. Children of the night-blest ones, who are seated here, I greet you."

796 776 539 575 [688]

Then he sang an entrance song, first at the west end of the lodge and then near the position occupied by the host. When he had finished the circuit of the lodge he went around again, making the accustomed peculiar utterances, until he came in front of the host. There he stopped and addressed the host as follows:

"I greet you. You have caused this day to come upon me and all my relatives. We have all tasted thereof and we have all felt ourselves in connection with life. We are thankful. We have thought of this blessing of life in connection with ourselves. I greet you."

Then he walks to the place assigned to him in the west end of the tent and sits down. The other members of his band do the same, one after the other, greeting the people in the lodge at the same time.

When they are all seated the fourth one comes in. He repeats the utterances of the former guests and then starts around the lodge until he reaches the entrance. There he stops and addresses the host:

"Councilors and life-obtainers, I greet your seats. I likewise greet you, host. You who are seated in the north and you who are seated in the west, your seats I greet. Children of the night-blessed spirits who are within this lodge, all of you I greet. It is good. As far as I understand this Night ceremony is considered a life-giving one. The so-called happy Night Spirits alone are in control of most of life. So I was told, and that is why this ceremony is called a life-giving